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(b) All Jewish antiquity referred the prophecy to the Messiah. The Targum of Onkelos has "until the Messiah come, whose is the kingdom."

The Jerusalem Targum: "until the time that the king Messiah shall come, whose is the kingdom."

The Targum of Pseudo-Jonathan: "till the king, the Messiah shall come, the youngest of his sons."

The Babylonian Talmud: "What is Messiah's name?" "His name is Shiloh, for it is written, Until Shiloh come."

(c) Ancient Versions, paraphrases, and commentaries make Shiloh the subject of, or the nominative case before the verb "come," not the accusative after it.

(d) This prophecy was evidently an important link in the long chain of predictions, which led to the general expectation of a Messiah, prevalent in Judea at the Christian era.

(e) We cannot fail to recognize an allusion to Shiloh in the passages of the prophets, in which the Messiah is described as the author of rest and peace (Isa. ix., 5; Mic. iv., 1-4; Isa. ii., 2-4; Zech. ix., 10, and many other passages).

(f) It is said that the interpretation given is contradicted by facts. It is affirmed that the sceptre had departed from Judah centuries before Christ was born. His kingdom, it is said, came to an end at the Babylonian captivity. After the return, the Jews were in subjection successively to the Persians and Greeks. The Maccabean princes did not spring from Judah; and Herod was a foreigner.

All this is granted. At the same time, something of Judah's sceptre still remained; and in due time Christ arose, of whom Gabriel said to Mary, "The Lord shall give unto him the throne of his father David, and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke i., 32, 33). "Until" is not exclusive, but inclusive. Judah still occupies the throne and wields the sceptre. "The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed" (Rev. v., 5).

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## THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

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### MAR. 14. ESTHER'S PETITION. Esth. iv., 10-17, and v., 1-3.

The name Ahasuerus is the name Xerxes. The Septuagint makes the king who married Esther to have been Artaxerxes. Josephus does the same, and on the other hand, places Ezra and Nehemiah in the days of Xerxes. He does this at the cost of telling what Nehemiah did in the twenty-fifth and twenty-eighth years of Xerxes, though Xerxes only reigned twenty-one years. There was a time when it was quite the fashion to accept these other authorities in preference to the Hebrew text. At present, no one doubts that the latter is here correct, though some of the muddled conclusions reached on the other theory are still repeated, and passed on from one hand to another.

The Book of Esther has no occasion to speak otherwise than respectfully of Xerxes, but the facts it states assign to him very much the same character which

he sustains in the Greek stories. His treatment of Vashti, and the magnificent feast connected with it, was worthy the man who thought he was going to conquer Greece because he had a bigger army than was ever raised before, and who attempted to cut Mount Athos into a statue, and to chain the Hellespont. His relations with Haman, both when he trusted him and when he hanged him, were of a piece with both.

It has been alleged that the Book of Esther is secular, and not religious, inasmuch as it does not even mention the name of God. But pious talk is not religion. If any one will read the Apocrypha connected with the Book of Esther, he will find plenty of religious words, but far less of a deep religious spirit than in the canonical book itself.

It should be noticed that the Books of Jonah and Esther, with the narratives in Daniel, form a group by themselves, in the literature contained in the Old Testament. They are all stories in which an individual Israelite is brought face to face with the whole power of Assyria or Babylonia or Persia, as the case may be, and achieve wonderful successes, through the special interposition of Jehovah. This form of composition came into high favor with the post-biblical Israelites, as the apocryphal narratives of Judith and of third Maccabees show. A comparison between any of the biblical books of this sort and any one of the Apocrypha of the same sort cannot fail to be very re-assuring to a believer in the separateness of the canonical books.

Not least important among the teachings of the Book of Esther is the one which is probably central in the Sunday School lesson taken from that book, namely, that men of all classes and conditions are providentially bound together, and involved each in the fate of others, so that it is never safe for the highest to neglect their duties to the lowest.

About sixty-three years before the twelfth year of Xerxes (Esther III., 7), the decree of Cyrus had been published, permitting the Jews to attempt the rebuilding of Jerusalem. About forty-two years before that date, the temple had been completed, under Darius. It was some sixteen years later than the same date, that Ezra received his commission to go to Jerusalem. While the affairs related in the Book of Esther were transacting, Ezra was doubtless in Babylonia, pursuing those studies which afterward made him famous as the ready scribe of the law of Jehovah. Had Haman's plans succeeded, they would have cut off the Jews in Palestine, as well as in the other parts of the Persian Empire. But the whole tenor of the narrative implies that the Jews in Palestine were then only a very small part of the whole Jewish world.

#### MAR. 21. MESSIAH'S MESSENGER. Mal. III., 1-6, and IV., 1-6.

The Book of Malachi is a prophetic "burden" (verse 1), in poetry, or perhaps, rather, in poetic form, rebuking and threatening Israel for certain specific sins. It is made up of the following five parts:

- I. Introduction, I., 1-5.
  - II. First rebuke, for priestly unfaithfulness, I., 6-II., 9.
  - III. Second rebuke, for foreign marriages, especially by priests, II., 10-16.
  - IV. Third rebuke, for disregard of Jehovah's moral government, II., 17-III., 15.
  - V. Conclusion. The day which Jehovah is making, III., 16 to close of book.
- Verbally, the transition from each of these five parts to the next is absolutely abrupt; but the second, the third, and the fifth parts are introduced, in a way quite

remarkable, for the Old Testament, by a statement of a general principle, from which the actual topic is afterward differentiated. Thus in I., 6, the principle that honor is due to a father or a master is made to introduce the rebuke to the priests for their unfilial and disloyal conduct. In II., 10, the fact that we have all one father, and are bound together by our common humanity, is used to introduce the rebuke for the inhumanities involved in mixed marriages. In III., 16, the statement that when they who fear the Lord "are bespoken" to one another, God hearkens and keeps a book of remembrance, is made to introduce the mention of his terrible coming day, with its discriminations between the righteous and the wicked.

Throughout the book, the one sin rebuked (one, though appearing in various forms) is a bad, self-righteous skepticism, which answers back when God speaks, instead of obeying. That this is the case sufficiently appears from the questions: "Wherein hast thou loved us?" "Wherein have we despised thy name?" "Wherein have we polluted thee?" "Wherefore?" "Wherein have we wearied him?" And the following, beginning in the introduction, repeated (eight times in all) in the three following divisions of the book. The unity of the book consists in the fact that it is throughout a rebuke of this sin.

From the statements made in Mal. III., 8-11, it appears that Judah and Jerusalem, when the prophecy was uttered, were neglecting to provide for the priests and Levites, by means of tithes and other offerings. From the statements made in Mal. I., 7-13, it appears that the priests and Levites were complaining of being poorly provided for, of finding the Lord's table and His allowance of provisions unsatisfactory, and were therefore habitually neglecting their duties, and belittling their office. Precisely such a state of things as this is described in Neh. XIII., 10-14. Again, from the statements made in Mal. II., 10-16, it appears that the marrying of foreign wives, especially on the part of the priests, was odiously prominent when the prophecy was uttered, and was, through God's reprobation of it, causing great distress—perhaps, that this was the case for a second time, the sin having once before been renounced. This is the same condition of things as that described in Neh. XIII., 23-30. Compare Neh. X., 29, 30, and Ezra IX., x., etc.

These and other similar considerations, together with the linguistic character of the book, are commonly regarded as fixing the date of Malachi as during the second administration of Nehemiah as Governor of Jerusalem, that is, at some time later than 432 B. C., and within the lifetime of a man who had then been some thirteen or more years engaged in public affairs. This point is briefly discussed in the closing paragraph of the article in *THE STUDENT* for February, 1886, page 266.

From Mal. II., 3, and III., 11, it appears that when the book was written, Judah was suffering from hard times, and a scarcity of supplies. From the thirteenth chapter of Nehemiah, it appears that the question of Sabbath desecration was prominently before the public, as well as the questions of priestly fidelity and of mixed marriages.

The rebuke which constitutes the fourth part of the Book of Malachi, in the analysis above given, is directed against both the priests and the people, for their unbelief in the reality of the moral government of Jehovah. It begins and closes, Mal. II., 17, and III., 13-15, with specifications under this charge. The prophet

denounces them as being in the habit of using the following maxims, and of answering back, instead of repenting, when reproved therefor by Jehovah:

"Any one who does evil is good in the eyes of Jehovah, and he delights in them."

"Where is the God of judgment?"

"It is an empty thing to serve God."

"What profit that we keep his ordinance, and that we walk darkly before Jehovah of hosts?"

"And now we, for our part, regard proud men as happy men."

"The doers of wickedness are builded up."

"Men tempt God, and escape."

The first of the two passages which constitute the Sunday School lesson is a part of the rebuke for the infidelity thus charged and specified. The beginning of it is a distinct allusion to the promise made by Jehovah to Israel in the wilderness, that he would send his messenger before them to drive out the nations, and give them the promised land, *Exod. XXIII., 20-23, and XXXII., 34-XXXIII., 2.* The opening clause, "Behold me sending my messenger . . . . before my face," is verbally adapted from *Exod. XXIII., 20-23*: "Behold I am sending a messenger before thy face, to keep thee in thy way," "For my messenger will go before thy face." The question, "Who shall abide the day of his coming," etc., seems to be an echo of the warning in *Exodus*: "Be on thy guard from before him, and hearken to his voice, and be not rebellious with him, for he will not forgive your wickednesses, for my name is within him." The fact that Malachi is thus alluding to the covenant at Sinai, accounts for his calling the messenger spoken of "the messenger of the covenant."

The thing here spoken of, therefore, is a new coming of Jehovah, a new promised land and sanctuary of rest, with the messenger going before, as of old, to prepare the way. It does not follow that the messenger is the same person with the one mentioned in *Exodus*. If he is to be identified with Elijah the prophet, he certainly is not the same. But the new manifestation of Jehovah, foretold by the prophet, is important enough to justify his describing it in the language used in recording the old covenant.

This passage is quoted in *Matt. XI., 10*; *Mark I., 2*; *Luke I., 76, and VII., 27.* The citation in *Matthew* consists of two metrical lines. The first line is unlike the text in *Malachi*, and is verbatim from the Septuagint of *Exodus*. The second line is from *Malachi*, and not from the Septuagint. The other New Testament citations are substantially the same, so far as comparison with originals is concerned.

The second of the two passages which constitute the lesson is the last six verses of the conclusion of the book. Evidently, the Committee have coupled it with the passage just mentioned, with the thought that Jehovah's messenger and the Elijah of *Mal. IV., 5*, are identical. This is quite commonly understood to be the New Testament view of the matter, as shown in the citation in *Luke I., 17*, and in the other New Testament passages which speak of Elias in connection with John the Baptist. But we should bear in mind that, in the Old Testament instances to which we should most naturally look, for illustrating this passage, that is, the instances in which the messenger of Jehovah appears to Abraham, to Manoah, and to others, it commonly turns out that Jehovah is the messenger sent as well as the God who sent him. There are pretty strong analogical reasons for holding

the same to be true of the messenger who preceded Israel to the promised land, and therefore for holding that this was the conception which was in the mind of the prophet Malachi. This interpretation would require us to separate the prediction concerning the messenger from that concerning Elijah, and to regard the messenger as the Messiah, whom the prophet thinks of as a new revelation of Jehovah. In that case, we should have to understand the evangelists, in their use of this passage, as identifying John by making references to the great event which he heralded, and not by applying the prophet's language directly to John himself. The case is different, of course, with the prediction concerning Elijah. That, they apply directly to John.

The Sunday School Lessons now change to the Gospel of John. A treatment of the first two lessons in John is fairly due in the present number of *THE STUDENT*; but the writer of these papers is compelled to ask indulgence for delaying all New Testament work until next month.

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## A BOOK-STUDY: FIRST SAMUEL.

BY THE EDITOR.

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### I. GENERAL REMARKS.

1. This is not intended to be a lecture, a paper, or an article; but rather a *study*. It will not furnish material; but directions for obtaining material. It is not written for professors, or specialists; but for those who need help in their Bible-study, and recognize this need.<sup>1</sup> The aim in view is (1) the acquisition of *real* Bible-knowledge; (2) the cultivation of a historical spirit; (3) the attainment of a habit of independent investigation.

2. The presentation of the results of one's labor, after the ground has been thoroughly covered, is one thing; the covering of the ground, in order to obtain results, is another. The difference, in the order of work, between the two is very great. Having the second of these in view, the order of our study must be made to correspond.<sup>2</sup>

3. This "study," with others like it, is perhaps, in some respects, an "ideal" one. It is not meant by this that it possesses any considerable degree of excellence; but simply that it includes some points the working out of which may have for some minds little attraction. Intellectual tastes differ. Some men, for example, have a passion for chronology; others detest it. Each student is to choose that which will be most profitable to him. While, therefore, the whole, and even more, is necessary for a complete work, some points may be gone over less carefully than others; some, indeed, may be omitted entirely.

4. The second "study" (in the April *STUDENT*) will take up *Second Samuel*; the third "study" (in the May *STUDENT*) will take up certain questions which

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<sup>1</sup> The number of those who need help may be very large; those, however, who recognize this need are, presumably, comparatively few.

<sup>2</sup> Right here is where so many students make a mistake. They, strangely enough, imagine that a reading over of results, without having gone through the processes leading to those results, is sufficient. If they who follow up this idea learn little or nothing, upon whom, pray, does the responsibility rest?